

TWO YEARS SINCE THE FALL OF CAETANO

by MIKE EVANS

THE PHASES OF THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION

Two years ago one hundred thousand workers packed the streets of Lisbon in the most joyful and triumphant May Day celebration Europe had seen for a quarter of a century. Soldiers fraternised with the crowd, with red carnations in the muzzles of their guns. A well-organised military coup, aimed at liquidating the bankrupt dictatorship, ending the hopeless colonial war in Africa, and modernising Portuguese capitalism, had overthrown the old regime; but when Caetano handed over power to Spínola, he said:

"General, I surrender the government to you. You must take care. I am frightened by the idea of power loose in the streets."

The next 18 months saw a series of major waves of working class advance. Firstly, the workers hunted down and rooted out the hated secret police of the old fascist regime, the PIDE. In factories, in offices, and on the land, the most reactionary supporters of the old regime, were purged, thrown out, by the workers themselves. A great strike wave swept Portugal as workers fought for decent wages and conditions long denied them.

Spínola and the senior officers of the MFA, to control the situation, took into the government representatives of the Portuguese Communist and Socialist Parties. With their support, a number of anti-strike laws and curbs on the freedom of the press were enacted. The workers were not cowed by these measures, and speedily rendered

Driven to desperation by working class militancy, Spínola and the more conservative elements in the MFA launched two abortive counter-coups — the 27th-28th September 1974 "march of the silent majority", which was crushed by armed workers and rank and file soldiers, and the 11th March 1975 attempted coup which led to Spínola's flight abroad.

Those events opened a new phase of the Portuguese revolution. In February 1975 30,000 landless farm-workers in the south of Portugal began to seize the land, confiscating the huge latifundia and setting up agricultural cooperatives. Particularly in and around Lisbon, workers began to create commissions in the factories, to demand and to win workers' control. In the banks, the newspaper offices, and the radio stations, workers seized control or exercised close supervision over the bosses.

In the army discipline began to crumble. The barracks became centres of political debate and discussion. The MFA itself was increasingly riven with divisions between the more conservative senior commanders and the radicalised junior officers. Instead of the MFA embodying "the Revolution" 'above parties', different elements in the MFA aligned themselves more and more clearly with different parties.

The election of a Constituent Assembly on 25th April 1975 gave the Socialist Party 38% of the vote, while the MFA's call for blank ballot papers won only 7%. The election result — 58% in total for parties claiming allegiance to the working class and to socialism — undoubtedly demonstrated a massive popular will to fight for socialism. The SP won votes by its demagoguery about socialism — after all, if you want socialism, why not vote Socialist — and because it appeared to stand for socialism and democracy. The concrete evidence for this was the SP's defence of elections against the CP/MFA attempt to put them off indefinitely, and the SP support for strikes which the government denounced and attacked. In addition, large numbers of petty bourgeois voted SP because it seemed a bulwark against dictatorship of the right or of the left; and the party most in favour of civilian rather than military rule.

Yet before the election the CP and SP had already promised slavish submission to the military leaders. Soares used the SP's support to launch an offensive against the workers who had occupied Republica, a paper he wished to use as the exclusive mouthpiece of the right wing leadership of the SP.

THE 'REPUBLICA' AFFAIR

Republica had formerly been an independent anti-fascist paper. Under Portuguese press law, which requires papers to state their political affiliation, it claimed still to be such. Yet the SP owners were turning it into a narrow SP factional organ. Journalists unsympathetic to the SP were forced to resign. The printworkers, alarmed by the underground editorial clampdown, and alarmed also by the falling circ-

A series of disputes finally led to the workers taking control and the management calling in the military to close the paper down. The management refused to reopen the paper unless the armed forces took measures against 'troublemakers' among the workers. Because of widespread popular support for the Republica workers, including in the Armed Forces, the workers were able to re-establish the paper under their control. They ran it as an organ of workers' democracy, publishing communiques of workers in struggle regardless of their factional allegiance.

The SP's claim that this was a Stalinist-inspired blow against the SP's freedom of expression (a claim unfortunately backed by many avowed Trotskyists) has little credibility. Certainly it is true that Marxists stand for freedom of the press being realised through material facilities being made available to all currents of opinion (including reactionary currents: their freedom of expression would be suppressed by a workers' government only as a matter of overriding revolutionary necessity, and we would oppose suppression by a bourgeois government). We do not subscribe to the notion of an 'impartial' press or a 'non-party' press, or a press controlled by those who work on it. We uphold the right of the Portuguese Socialist Party to publish its views. Yet those principles do not justify the SP's account.

Few of the printworkers involved were CP members — indeed, the majority, at least at the outset, were SP supporters. The CP-dominated Intersindical gave them little support. The SP, a powerful and rich party, with two other papers supporting its line (Jornal Novo and Portugal Socialista), and with the means to import a new printing press and staff it with SP members whenever it wished, was in no danger of having its voice silenced. In its earlier control of Portuguese television, and its later participation in press censorship under the 6th Provisional Government, the SP has showed itself no friend of media freedom. When, under the 6th Provisional Government, the worker-controlled Republica was finally suppressed, the SP did not bother to take it over. The Republica affair had served its purpose. By abstractly counterposing the forms of bourgeois democracy to the growth of workers' democracy and workers' control, it had served as a cover for counter-revolution.

THE ANTI-COMMUNIST CAMPAIGN IN THE NORTH

Hiding under slogans about "pluralist democracy", the SP withdrew from the Government and launched a vicious anti-communist and anti-trade union campaign centring in the North. All the forces of reaction lined up behind the SP offensive. CP, Trade Union and left wing party offices were attacked by mobs led by the open fascists of the Portuguese Liberation Army and encouraged by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Many rank and file Socialist Party members were alarmed and shocked. But it was their party's demagogy that had unleashed these attacks.

The CP at first tried to meet this offensive by bureaucratic and

and calling on the army to prevent them. These manoeuvres were a dismal failure and indeed, only drove workers and petty bourgeois towards Soares and his party. The CP's counter-rallies in the North were defeated, the army refusing to support them and fire on counter-demonstrators.

On 20th August the working class response began, with a huge demonstration in Lisbon around the demands of the 'Copcon document'. Important sections of the Lisbon proletariat, particularly from the Lisnave and Senenave shipyards, where the struggle for workers' control was particularly vigorous and the left groups were strong, took the lead in organising mass mobilisations against the right wing threat. The CP, terrified by the impotence of the Goncalves government and by its increasing isolation, turned to the revolutionary groups for a 'united front', which was concluded on the 24th. The CP included in the platform the 'defence of the 5th Provisional Government', and succeeded in diverting the massive rally of 27th September into a demonstration of support for Goncalves and Costa Gomes.

The fall of Goncalves and the 5th Provisional Government, and the creation of the 6th Government led by Admiral Pinheiro de Azevedo — in which the Antunes 'group' of nine are predominant and in which the SP and PPD have much more influence than the CP — marked the beginning of a whole new period of sharp confrontation between the government and the workers of Lisbon and the south.

Its features were:

1. The strengthening and growth of the workers and neighbourhood commissions; the intensification of the struggle for workers' control.
2. The increasing attempts to coordinate these various bodies and their role in the mass mobilisations of the autumn.
3. The wave of massive and militant economic struggles.
4. The rise of the mass movement of rank and file soldiers, the almost total breakdown of military discipline, and the emergence of SUV.

This massive wave of struggle was accompanied by and to some extent facilitated by the acquiescence of the CP in mass struggles, in order to weaken the d'Azevedo government and to increase its own power within it at the expense of the PPD and SP. The manoeuvres of Saraiva de Carvalho and his supporters, opportunistically posing as the champions of workers' and soldiers' mobilisations, also contributed.

But how did the revolutionary left try to take advantage of this mobilisation, and to disentangle it from the webs of Stalinism and of 'military leftism'?

THE 'REVOLUTIONARY UNITED FRONT' (FUR)

After the collapse of the 25th August platform, the revolutionary

came together in the FUR. The FUR confused the question of the united front with that of the building of a revolutionary party, and thus ended up blocking the solution to either question.

Its manifesto stated: [the FUR] "sets itself the task of uniting revolutionaries around a revolutionary platform of struggle that the popular masses accept as theirs". It represented "a contribution to the unification and organisation of the class vanguard".

As a programme for revolutionary unity, for forming a revolutionary party, it was totally inadequate. It did not define the front's attitude to the CP or the MFA bonapartists. Its governmental slogan was the vague and opportunistic "struggle for a government of revolutionary unity". It neither defined itself against the other tendencies within the workers' movement, nor clearly set as its goal the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The very concept of a 'revolutionary vanguard' was a muddling of a number of uses of the term. It confused the actual organised leadership of the class which, both in the commissions and the unions, was still under the political and organisational leadership of the CP, with that radicalised stratum of younger militants who adhered to no particular programme or party, and who were, in fact, strongly influenced by anti-party ideas, and confused about the role of de Carralho and the Copcon lefts. This stratum was certainly extremely radical but it had not, and could not without being consolidated round a revolutionary programme and party, win the leading positions in the commissions and the other mass organs. The FUR could lead these forces in mass demonstrations, especially when the CP was mobilising its forces for its own bureaucratic purposes, but against the CP's opposition it could not centralise the commissions into workers' councils. It could help link the struggles of workers and rank and file soldiers, alongside the SUV movement, but neither the FUR nor MES raised the central demands for the arming of the workers and for a workers' militia. The grievousness of that failure was shown on 25th November, when crowds of workers gathered outside barracks asking for guns.

With the 'nebulous bloc' of the FUR hindering the clarification of a revolutionary nucleus, there was not the essential instrument for the revolutionary use of the united front tactic. But, in any case, as a manifesto for a united front tactic aimed at the CP, SP and non-party masses, the FUR platform was disqualified by being aimed at revolutionaries alone. It ignored the question of democratic liberties, characterised the elections as "bourgeois" and demanded the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly when no alternative basis for a workers' government was actually in existence. (In the real situation, that demand could only mean a call for the military to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. In other words, for unconstitutional bourgeois rule as against constitutional bourgeois rule, or the shadowy form of it). It repeatedly lumped together the fascists and social-democrats, drawing no distinction between the mass base of the SP and the counter-revolutionary policy of the Soares leadership. On the other hand, it did not mention the CP or its policies. It was clearly aimed at the

non-party 'vanguard' — and could only hinder the crystallisation of a genuine revolutionary Marxist vanguard.

Thus, despite huge mass action by the working class (the siege of the Constituent by the building workers), despite successful struggles to expel right wing officers from the barracks, no centralisation of the workers' and soldiers' rank and file organisations into workers' councils occurred in time to meet the right wing offensive. The tactics of the revolutionary left did not help the stratum of the most revolutionary militants to tackle the question of prising the dead hand of the CP from the workers' organisations and to give an active lead to the masses of workers and petty bourgeois still under the CP's sway. To do that required and requires a clear understanding of the nature and role of the SP and CP, of the MFA and its various factions.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY

The Socialist Party, despite its demagoguery about socialism and workers' control, holds up before the working class the transformation of Portugal into a "normal" bourgeois democracy. This attracted to it those workers and petty bourgeois who had the strongest illusions in 'democracy' and the least confidence in their own strength and organisation. The bureaucratic manoeuvres of the CP with the MFA, its attempt to stamp out opposition to itself within the Inter-sindical, and its opposition to strikes during the first five provisional governments, led many of these workers to see Soares' party as the standard bearer of democratic rights.

Yet the Socialist Party was not opposed to the subordination of "parliamentary democracy" and the constituent assembly to the military governments. It has signed the various pacts with the Council of the Revolution of the Army hierarchy which condemn both the Constituent Assembly and the new Legislative Assembly to impotence. Soares merely wanted to use the Constituent Assembly as a power base to squeeze the CP out of the state apparatus and its alliance with the MFA, and to install the SP there instead, to pursue an anti-working class policy of crushing the self-activity and gains of the masses.

Throughout the summer of 1975, he was quite prepared to use the SP to mobilise the reactionary peasants of the North in collusion with extreme right-wing elements, to launch vicious onslaughts on CP and trade union offices in the North and Centre of the country. After Soares' success in squeezing out the 5th Provisional Government, in early September, the SP allied itself with the d'Azevedo government and the right wing of the MFA.

At the peak of the massive strike wave and rank and file soldiers' mobilisations against the government in October and November, Soares called for the removal of the government and the Constituent Assembly to the North, aiding the reactionary officers who were contemplating civil war should the working class of Lisbon and the south seize power. Soares was quite prepared to use the SP to give

The treachery of the CP and the confusion of the revolutionary left made this unnecessary. Yet Soares hastened to hail Jaime Neves, who masterminded the crushing of the paratroopers and Copecon on November 25th, as the saviour of "the revolution". "November 25th", he said, "saved the revolution. In one blow November 25th wiped out the suicidal inclinations of the far left and cut the ground from under the far right. Democracy emerged from the test victorious and strengthened."

Since then Soares and the SP have supported every anti-working class measure — the restoration of "order and discipline" in the army and the arrest of hundreds of rank and file soldiers, and the reneging by the employers (with the aid of a government wage freeze) on the contracts extracted by the workers in the autumn. "The suspension of contracts", claimed Soares, "was the only realistic policy for dealing with the chaos that was threatening".

The SP has signed the new pact with the MFA on 25th April 1976, allowing for an all-powerful president, most likely a military figure, and rendering the legislative assembly subordinate to the 'forces of order'. Throughout the election campaign, it presented itself as the 'party of government', stressing to the workers its unwillingness to govern with the increasingly unpopular PPD and to the bourgeois and petty bourgeois, its implacable hostility to the CP and the Interindical.

The SP remains bitterly hostile to the land occupations and the cooperative farmers of the Alentejo, even to the extent of violently attacking the SP Minister of Agriculture, Lopes Cardoso, who stands on the left of the party, as a "secret communist" because he defends the "legal occupations" in the south.

Yet the SP, despite its bourgeois counter-revolutionary leadership and policies, still has substantial working-class support. Rank and file SP workers, organised in factory nuclei, have joined with rank & file members of the CP and the revolutionary groups in organising support for workers in struggle. This 'left wing' of the SP is allowed no free expression within the party. It is hounded and persecuted. A series of purges and expulsions have been organised by Soares and his cronies.

A group of Socialist Party militants, anonymous because of the witch-hunt against "CP infiltrators", published a "Revolutionary self-criticism" after the November events. It stated:

"In order to shake hands with Pinheiro d'Azevedo... to maintain the ministerial positions of our doctors, we are supporting press censorship, the freeing of fascists and PIDEs, the imprisonment of progressives, increase in the cost of living, the payment of indemnities to capitalists and latifundists, and the repression that is beginning to return.... Comrades, we are going to reflect and act. We are going to organise meetings in our branches to discuss the situation impartially and internally, and define the strategy to be followed. We are not going to leave the Socialist Party. We are going to transform it into a

(and not splitters and followers of Soares). We are going to struggle for Socialism before it is too late!"

In the period around the elections Soares was bitterly hostile to a coalition with the CP. But though privately he would like to rule with the PPD, he has enormous difficulties in doing that. As 'The Economist' pointed out on May 1st, "His admirers abroad sometimes forget that his party contains a powerful faction sympathetic to the Communists. Unless Mr Soares is prepared to watch it live off — which might in the end be the best thing — he has to pick his way very cautiously between the rivals on his flanks."

The SP is not the monolithic bulwark of "pluralist democracy" or of "social fascism" that either its bourgeois friends or its semi-Maoist opponents think. Revolutionaries must relate to the crisis in its ranks, or it will be solved to the benefit of Messrs Soares and Cunha and the great loss of the vanguard of the Portuguese working class.

THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNIST PARTY

The PCP is the majority party of the industrial and rural proletariat, comprising the best-organised and most experienced militants. Yet it has, since the 25th April 1974, criminally misled the working class.

Entering the first Spínola provisional government, it denounced the striking bakery workers as fascists and attacked the postal workers' strike. It supported the notorious anti-strike law of 29th August 1974. It has been the principal advocate of the "special role" of the MFA over the past two years. In the Interindical the CP has bureaucratically suppressed the right of other working class tendencies to have a voice, thus playing into the hands of Soares. Its grip on the workers' commissions helped limit them to economic issues and obstructed their development as organs of working class mobilisation and power.

During the summer 1975 offensive of the SP and the reactionaries, the CP tied the working class response to support for Vasco Gonçalves, turning massive working class demonstrations into an auxiliary of his grouping within the MFA.

The CP made an apparent 'left' turn after the fall of the 5th Provisional Government and, whilst participating in the 6th Government, used the massive mobilisations of the autumn as a bargaining counter to squeeze PPD and SP ministers out of the government and to install CP ministers in their place. One of these manoeuvres coincided with a spontaneous revolt of the paratroopers in response to a deliberately engineered right-wing provocation. During the events of 25th November, the CP at first called a two-hour general strike, then beat a retreat, telling the workers to go back to work and "remain calm". It left the paratroopers to go down to defeat.

Since the treachery of November, the CP has continued to hold

the hope of making electoral gains. In a statement on the nurses' and bankworkers' struggles, the Political Committee of the CP condemned these manifestations of the recovery of working class confidence.

"The withholding of care from patients in hospitals, power cuts, cuts in essential services, the closure of banks, as well as strikes in the civil service and in local authorities, can only in the present circumstances serve the plans of reaction."

The chances of workers' revolution in Portugal depend on the building of a new revolutionary party, independent of both Social Democracy and Stalinism — that is clear. The task is one of achieving programmatic clarity, of overcoming and fighting the confusion of the fragmented left-centrist groupings, of winning the subjectively revolutionary 'non-party' workers. A revolutionary nucleus, once consolidated, must also fight, using the united front tactic, to win mass support in the SP and CP ranks, and to break those ranks from the leadership of Soares and Cunhal.

The first essential for political clarity is an understanding of the role of the MFA.

THE MFA AND THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

The partial disintegration of the old bureaucratic state apparatus after the 25th April 1974, the discrediting and driving from office of many figures associated with the Salazar and Caetano regimes, the disbandment or discrediting of the various police and paramilitary bodies (though the PSP and GNR remained in being, to come to the fore again after 25th November), the flight of thousands of bureaucrats and businessmen, left only one force capable of holding the ring between the weakened bourgeoisie and its American and European masters, and the resurgent working class movement — the Army.

The initial Spinoist strategy was to reform Portuguese capitalism, integrating it into the EEC, carrying out strictly limited nationalisations, while keeping tight control over the working class. In pursuance of this policy, Copcon, the new internal security force set up after April 25th, several times moved against strikers. In Africa, while Guinea's independence was unavoidable, the Spinoists sought a neo-colonial solution for Mozambique and, more especially, Angola.

Nevertheless, working class militancy and radicalisation in the army outpaced the Spinoist project. After the defeated coups in September and March, the MFA's policy shifted substantially. Widespread nationalisations — explicitly rejected only a short time before in the MFA's "Economic Plan" — were carried through: many of the leading elements of the bourgeoisie were jailed or left the country. Attempts to retain Portuguese control in Angola and Mozambique were abandoned. Military discipline broke down to a large extent. Un-its (particularly of Copcon) sent against workers in struggles such as Radio Renascença would decide after discussion with the workers

The MFA, raising itself above society as the only force to control the social contradictions — albeit shakily at times — pursued a state capitalist policy. They struck at the private ownership of important sectors of industry, but they remained vigorously hostile to the struggle for workers' control waged by workers in the factories, in the countryside, and in the mass media, and they retained the essential hierarchic apparatus of the bourgeois state. The more left-wing officers, some of whom aspired to introduce what they thought to be socialism in place of 'state capitalism', were nevertheless tied into the framework of the 'MFA/People Alliance'.

The armed forces hierarchy, while unable for a period to wield strict discipline, remained intact, ready to reimpose its discipline at the best opportunity. Even at the highest points of the struggle during 1975, abolition of military ranks, election of officers, and — most importantly — systematic arming of the workers and forming of workers' militias — did not become reality. The workers' control exercised at workplace and neighbourhood level never centralised itself and equipped itself with armed self-defence.

Some of the more left-wing elements of the MFA consciously modelled their politics on the national liberation struggles in Guinea and Mozambique, and others adapted to those politics. The MFA's policy could be compared to Egypt, Iraq, or Syria, where a military-run state apparatus, acquiring a high degree of autonomy, drastically restructured a decrepit capitalism along statist lines.

In Portugal that military-state-capitalist strategy found itself in a unique and original combination with a working class upsurge in the tradition of France 1968 or Italy 1969, and an advanced radicalisation in and decomposition of the armed forces (analogous to the situation in the CRS and other forces in France immediately post-world war 2 — though the 'film' of events in Portugal was, until 25th November 1975, running in the opposite direction to that in France, where the bourgeoisie gradually asserted complete control of forces initially dominated by working class ex-Resistance militants).

The Portuguese CP supported the military, as its sister Stalinist parties in the Middle East had done. In doing that, it incurred the disapproval of the Socialist Party, and of the Italian and Spanish CPs. But the PCP's tactics did not represent any radical break to the left from modern Stalinism. They simply corresponded to the needs of containing an insurgent, militant working-class base, and above all of adhering at all costs to the 'progressive' forces, namely the MFA.

The more astute bourgeois commentators had a cool assessment of the MFA. Arthur Schlesinger, in mid-1975, said:

"Portugal going Communist is not a happy prospect. It is also a considerable exaggeration. The immediate prospect, if the democratic forces fail to sustain themselves, is not a Communist takeover. It is rather the establishment of a military regime, Nasserite in its model and neutralist in its foreign policy, using the Portuguese Communist Party for counsel and support. Such a regime might well deny military bases to the United States, but there is no reason to suppose

that, any more than Egypt or Peru, it would turn overnight into a Soviet satellite."

Yet, fearing the radical nationalist measures of such a military regime, and the obvious instability of the Armed Forces Movement, international big business has hoped and worked for a bourgeois democracy in Portugal headed by a Socialist Party government.

The SP, therefore, has consistently acted as the Portuguese party of NATO and the EEC. The established leadership of the Portuguese working class movement has been split between two petty bourgeois alternatives, each of which could be presented as 'left-wing' compared to the other. That these alternatives were not fundamentally opposed in class terms was demonstrated by the fact that the CP and the SP have served together in government for most of the time since 25th April 1974, and that the two alternatives have to an extent reached a compromise since 25th November.

Yet many revolutionaries have tailed one or the other petty bourgeois alternative.

The task of revolutionaries was and is to cut through demagoguery about 'the' classless "Revolution", to fight for democratic rights as a means of mobilising workers against the military regime and of facilitating free organisation and free political clarification in the workers' movement while resisting any use of abstract democracy as a block on the development of workers' control and workers' power. Thus revolutionaries would oppose the CP's attempts to impose trade union unity through state decree, the right-wing attacks on the CP, and the vague and dangerous slogans of 'dissolve the Constituent Assembly' and 'a government of revolutionary unity', while, at the same time, opposing the SP's demagoguery over 'Republica' and the slogan of 'all power to the Constituent Assembly'.

No tendency has steered such a course.

SARAIVA DE CARVALHO AND MILITARY LEFTISM

The consistent aim of the top brass of the MFA was to present it as a united body. In this they were assisted by the PCP, particularly during the period of the 5th Provisional Government of Vasco Gonçalves. The CP and the MFA leaders propagated the idea of the special role of the army in the Portuguese revolution. The MFA leaders toyed for a whole period with the idea of a 'non-political' movement. They recommended abstention in the 1975 elections as a vote for the MFA — a strategy which received a rude rebuff from the overwhelming majority of the electorate. They extracted from the political parties a pact which rendered the Constituent Assembly virtually powerless.

But, from early 1975, with growing working class militancy, the MFA leaders realised more and more that they would have to manipulate and ally with the parties rather than by-passing or smothering them. Pro-CP (Goncalves...) and pro-SP (Antunes...) factions developed in the MFA. Given the size of the layer of workers which was, in

an incoherent way, to the left of the CP and SP, it was inevitable that a 'revolutionary left' faction should also develop in the MFA. There is no need to assume a MFA 'conspiracy' to divert the revolutionary left. Nevertheless that was the effective role played by the tendency personified by Otelio Saraiva de Carvalho, commander of Copcon.

In September 1974 Carvalho complained it was left to the workers to repel the Spinoist 'march of the silent majority', "which should be the task of the forces of order". By the time of the March coup he was advocating precisely this mobilisation. Carvalho, with his visit to Havana, began to present himself as the Portuguese Castro. Whilst jockeying for power within the shaky state machine, he went along with plans for 'popular assemblies', linked to the MFA but supposedly 'independent' of political parties. The rank and file and junior officers of Copcon produced a scheme for popular assemblies of workers and soldiers — the 'Copcon document'. Carvalho endorsed this document, whilst flirting with the more right-wing opponents of Goncalves and the 5th Provisional Government, Antunes and Fabiao, in August 1975.

The MFA never set about organising these 'Popular Assemblies' officially, but in some areas, especially around Lisbon, they were set up by rank and file initiative. Despite the written scheme for MFA tutelage, the Popular Assemblies actually took on the form of embryonic workers' councils. Revolutionaries could have drawn out from the 'Copcon document' the proposals that allowed the promotion of working class mobilisation, presenting them from a clear working class angle and ruthlessly criticising the overall trend of the 'Copcon document'. The document lumped together fascism, social-democracy, and 'state-capitalism', opposed 'bourgeois elections', and affirmed the 'MFA/People Alliance'.

In short, revolutionaries had to fight all varieties of military bonapartism. Instead, most of the so-called revolutionary groups flirted with Carvalho. After all, he had taken up their woolly and opportunistic slogans of 'people's power', 'popular' assemblies. He had taken up their dangerous anti-bourgeois-democratic slogans 'out with the scum' (meaning the parliamentary politicians), 'down with the Constituent Assembly', for a 'revolutionary' or 'anti-imperialist' government.

Concentrating all their fire against the Soares anti-communist offensive of the summer of 1975, they sacrificed or confused the fight for independent organs of working class power, for rank and file soldiers' committees independent of the MFA hierarchy, for the election of officers and the creation and arming of a workers' militia, to slogans which led to a continued dependence of the workers' on military leaders and saviours. The left groups also adapted to the anti-political current among the most militant workers. They saw it as an overcoming of the influence of the reformist parties, and failed to see that it involved illusions in the left military and dependence on them. Under the impression of the temporary alliance of Soares with extreme right-wing elements in the North, semi-Maoist ideology

about 'social fascism' was allowed to run riot.

When the working class counter-offensive got under way in the autumn, it saw the most advanced elements of the working class under the sway of a programme of confusion, certainly eager for a socialist revolution, but unclear as to whether this might mean a Carvalho coup or a stronger role in the government for the CP. It is a contemptible revolutionary who blames the masses' or the vanguard's 'lack of maturity' for the collapse of the 25th November.

What was involved was a failure of leadership. When these workers were suddenly deserted by Carvalho and the left-wing officers, when the CP suddenly obstructed and demobilised the general strike, when the revolutionary groups did not know what to do and were revealed to have made no preparations for the 'armed insurrection' they had been talking about so hotly in the pages of their papers, the workers of Lisbon were not unsurprisingly unable to overcome these betrayals by some sort of spontaneous exertion of revolutionary consciousness.

THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT: THE U.D.P.

The UDP is the largest of the groups of the far left, mainly as a result of support for rank-and-file militancy, unaccompanied by any clear revolutionary socialist perspective. It had one member in the Constituent Assembly, and one in the Legislative Assembly.

The UDP's programme is for a two-stage revolution on the Stalinist model. Speaking in July 1975, Vladimir Guinot, a leader of the UDP, declared:

'It is not a socialist revolution which is underway. What our people demand, what is under way, is the need to advance the Popular Democratic Revolution... let us install a true democracy, a popular democracy. Socialism will come later!'

The UDP combines advocacy of the reformist tactic of the popular front, "a front of the whole people", with a characterisation of the CP as 'social-imperialist'. It isolates the 'foreign imperialists' as the main enemy, and calls for a 'government of national independence'.

All these slogans sow confusion. The popular front is supposed to include 'progressive' elements of the MFA, although the bankruptcy of policies which urge the workers to rely on 'left wing' generals and officers was amply demonstrated on November 25th, when Oteio

Sariva de Carvalho appeared with the prime minister to urge calm. The characterisation of the CP as social imperialists makes even a limited defensive united-front with them impossible, and plays into the hands of right-wing anti-communist demagogues. Concentration on foreign imperialism panders to chauvinism and takes the focus off the main enemy at home. The UDP has helped sow confusion in the workers' and tenants' commissions and obstructed their centralisation.

THE P.R.P./B.R.

The PRP-BR, originating in a guerrillaist split from the CP, combines a militarist view of the party with a spontaneist conception of mass action. One of the most successful practitioners of armed struggle against the Salazar and Caetano regimes, it failed to emerge into legal activity until several months after the April 1974 coup, believing, as it still does, that bourgeois democracy is not possible in Portugal. Its military orientation gave it a considerable following among rank and file soldiers and officers.

During the spring and summer of 1975, the PRP launched a campaign to build 'revolutionary workers' councils', CRTs. But this tactic distracted attention from the task of winning the existing organs of working class mobilisation, the workers' and tenants' commissions. It posed the question of 'soviets' in a flat propaganda sense. The PRP's programme for the CRT movement confused the tasks of party and of soviet. The CRTs were to "carry out a constant ideological struggle -- to destroy the bourgeois state apparatus -- to be organs of the application of revolutionary violence -- to overcome the bourgeois division of labour", etc. This approach, when the great majority of workers remained under the influence of the reformist parties, failed to see that only a genuine united-front tactic, posed round concrete aims of struggle and not general revolutionary declarations, could expose the reformist leaders and forge unity in action. The PRP's participation in the FUR reflected the same mistake. As Trotsky pointed out during the Stalinist Comintern's ultra-left Third Period, and in polemic against the ultra-lefts at the CP's Third Congress of 1921, to have only a united front 'from below' is to take as solved the very problem the united front tactic attempts to deal with, the adherence of masses of workers to the reformist parties and leaders.

In reality, the PRP saw it as only necessary to propagandise for soviets. The masses would turn this propaganda into reality. The mass upsurge of the autumn led the PRP to suppose that the hold of reformism was broken. As early as September 10th, the PRP paper 'Revolucão' declared: "It is now time for an insurrectionary forces and the workers to pose the question of an insurrection".

This ultra-left semi-anarchist approach was 'topped off' and complemented by gross opportunism vis-a-vis Carvalho. "Oteio" the PRP declared, "had kept faith with the revolutionary left". The question of the power of workers' councils was confused with that of a left-wing military government, by slogans of 'popular power', 'government of national independence', 'government of revolutionary unity'.

25th November was an indictment of the PRP's evasion of the political tasks of a revolutionary party. They had failed to observe that one reason for the autumn's mass upsurge was that the CP and some of the MFA lefts were encouraging working class militancy in order to redress their weakened position within the new government. When, on the 25th, the reactionaries dared them to act, they retreated, leaving the soldiers and workers to bear the brunt of the reaction.

The PRP, despite "posing the question of an insurrection", had not organised it, and were caught in a state of total confusion. They had taken up the question of arming the workers only in the sense of arming the PRP, not of forming united-front workers' militias. Reliance on left officers also meant that SUV proved a broken reed when those officers deserted their posts on 25th-26th November.

The PRP has not learned the necessary lessons. It refused to participate in the elections, because they were a bourgeois trick. As when it called for the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in summer 1975, the PRP imagines that democratic illusions can be overcome by flatly denouncing them. It has raised the foolish slogan, "No to bourgeois election". Parallel to this anti-parliamentary cretinism is a continued opportunism as regards military leftism. The PRP, far from fighting the bourgeois strategy of a military president — a bulwark for a continuation of the army's bonapartist role — calls for Carvalho to stand for president.

The International Socialists, who have fraternal links with the PRP, have tardily begun to criticise some of their failings. Through most of the summer and autumn they kept silent, or rather, batted in the reflected glory of the 'successes' of their Portuguese brethren. In their pamphlet, "The Lessons of the 25th November 1975", Tony Cliff and Chris Harman read the PRP a lesson out of Lenin on putschism and Blanquism. They decide retrospectively that a revolutionary situation did not exist, because of the unevenness between the workers' and soldiers' mobilisations, and the lack of a mass revolutionary party. Their recipe, in Portugal as in Britain, is to build the party and return to the economic struggle.

As in Britain, however, they have no strategic notion of how to break the hold of the reformists. Yes, the party is necessary: but around what strategy will it be built? Yes, the economic struggle is important, but political tasks, albeit different ones, are just as central now as then. IS has rejected the key lessons of the Leninist CI and of the Trotskyist movement on the use of the united front tactic and on the fight for transitional demands. In the last analysis, IS has no tactics for fighting reformism in Portugal or in Britain — it can only adapt to it or denounce it. The PRP has little to learn from these mentors.

THE LCI

The LCI — sympathising section of the USFI — has a record of considerable political and programmatic confusion, in no way corrected by the International of which it is a part. The USFI's conception of "the revolutionary process" led the LCI, a tiny organisation, to regard itself as being on some sort of historical conveyor belt leading to the socialist revolution. The concept of a "broad workers' vanguard" ("independent" of the Socialist Party and Communist Party filled it with optimism that those parties would present no real obstacle to the process

transformed into "organs of dual power". As to the tasks once that dual power was achieved, they were, in line with the 1973 USFI European Perspectives Document, entirely vague.

Certainly, particularly in the Lisbon area, there existed large numbers of workers — the workers of Lisnave and Setenave, for example — who supported initiatives by groups to the left of the CP on issues of workers' control, and which would join demonstrations against the 6th Provisional government. It is, however, one thing to struggle for workers' control in the factory, to vote for abstract resolutions on the dictatorship of the proletariat, to demonstrate in solidarity with the soldiers, even to leave or express dissatisfaction with the CP. It was quite another to organise those workers into a vanguard positively independent of and opposed to the CP. The strength of the CP was indicated by its hold on the workers' commissions.

The result of the LCI's positions was to underestimate the hold of democratic illusions and of the parties which propagated them. The faith in 'the revolutionary process' led the LCI to overestimate the 'radicalisation' of the CP and virtually to write off the SP as any sort of workers' party, and to underestimate the need to orient the workers and rank and file soldiers against the MFA right and left. Thus the LCI signed the 25th August accord supporting the 5th Provisional Government — a government administering capitalism. Its rationale for signing — that the 25th August front, though perhaps dubious from the point of view of principle, was necessary in order to repel a probable right wing advance — shows that the LCI had come to consider themselves, not an intransigent ideological minority, but 'inspiration-general' of the revolutionary process.

After the expulsion of the CP from the 25th August bloc, the LCI signed the confused manifesto of the FUR, which was an obstacle to the crystallisation of a clear revolutionary nucleus and to the struggle for a genuine united-front offensive on the CP and its members. There it merged itself with the other groups of the 'independent mass vanguard'. A clear-headed position on the united front, a merciless exposure of the errors of these centrist formations, could have warned their supporters and brought the LCI substantial gains after 25th November.

At an extraordinary congress held on January 10th-11th, the LCI, following criticisms made by the USFI, published a self-criticism of its participation in the errors of those mistakes. The present policies however extend to the roots of those mistakes. The present policies of the LCI focus on the call for a national congress of workers' commissions and a democratic congress of all the trade unions. Again a united front of the reformist, centrist and revolutionary workers' parties is given no priority. The governmental slogan, "for a workers' peasants' government responsible to a national congress of workers' commissions and a democratic congress of all the trade unions" is maximalist, ignoring the reality of the workers' parties' alliance with various bourgeois forces and the parliamentary situation.

The commissions and trade unions are viewed teleologically as 'the first soviet', whilst neglecting the need for them to coordinate unit-

ed action to ward off the capitalist offensive.

The immediate governmental slogan addressed to the workers in the commissions and the trade unions should be to force the CP and the SP to break with the bourgeoisie and to form a government. The question of what it would be based on depends on the success of building a real united front, on the relationship of forces. The SP and the CP would cling to alliance with the army and the bourgeoisie, they would hide behind the constitutional forms of the legislative assembly. The workers would fight to force it to carry out the policies of a workers' united front. That fight could only be grounded on battles round concrete demands, not general slogans as to what the government should be based on. The government would be a workers' government only if the workers forced it to carry out those policies and to arm the workers against reaction. Given the growth of a revolutionary party, such a government could be a transitional stage to the seizure of power and the proletarian dictatorship, based on workers' councils.

THE STRUGGLE FOR WORKERS' CONTROL

The essential feature of the Portuguese economy, inherited from fifty years of military dictatorship and fascism, was its extreme backwardness. Heavily dependent on an old fashioned colonial empire which outlasted the French and British, on its cheap and abundant raw materials, the Salazar regime maintained a domestic economy which had an extremely large and conservative agriculture. This consists of minifundia in the North run by a small peasantry, extremely conservative and dominated by the church. Salazar saw the maintenance of a stable and patriarchal peasant society in the North as the most secure social basis of his regime. At the same time for 40 years he tried to avoid too much industrial development, sensing that a large industrial proletariat would spell doom for his Portugal. In the South, huge estates, latifundia, with an extremely poor agricultural proletariat, exploited and impoverished the land.

Portuguese industry was dominated by the banks heading huge conglomerate industrial/financial empires, relying unduly heavily on sources of funds such as remittances from migrant workers because of the low domestic rate of capital formation.

From the early sixties this picture began to change with a massive and increasing influx of foreign capital. Between 1961 and 1965 direct foreign investment went up by five times. Between 1970 and 1973, it rose by three times, reaching a third of all private investment in Portugal in the latter year. This investment was based on the exceptionally low wages of the working class and the military/police rep-

paid in 1973 were 1/5 of those paid to equivalent British workers-- 60% of the population received a weekly wage of less than £12.

However Portugal's non-integration into the EEC did not make sense either to the foreign multinationals or to the leading sectors of Portuguese big business. The mounting cost of the colonial war was increasingly acting as a brake on the economy i.e. a 'modern' neo-colonial situation was required which guaranteed Portuguese and foreign investments in Africa, whilst off-loading political rule onto the shoulders of a local ruling class on the pattern of Britain's and France's decolonisation policy of the fifties and sixties.

Alas for the ruling class this solution was not to be. The military hierarchy proved obdurate and the coup of April 74 got out of control and opened the Pandora's box of class struggle.

After April 74, the working class erupted into a series of wages battles, which the Provisional Governments could not contain. In addition, large numbers of businessmen and managers closely associated with the old regime, fled to avoid the retribution awaiting them from the working class. A wave of occupations of workers having to take over their factories due to the flight of their bosses, ensued.

Political instability, the flight of foreign and domestic capital plus the effects of world inflation and recession, threw the Portuguese economy into confusion. The economic policy of the first 5 Provisional Governments was vacillating and unstable. On the one hand, they tried to hold the concessions to the workers to a minimum, imposing wage restrictions and anti-union legislation. On the other, the wave of working class militancy, particularly after the right-wing coup attempt in March 1975, forced massive nationalisations. The banks had been closely involved in the preparations for the coup. The bank workers successfully forced the government into taking them over. Because of their ownership of nearly 2/3 of Portuguese industry, a huge state capitalist sector was suddenly created. By the early summer of 75, 70% of Portugal's industrial plants was in the hands of the state and the workers commissions exercised varying elements of workers' control within them. In a whole series of firms, particularly the smaller ones, workers were forced to take over their management after the management fled.

The MFA "economic programme" elaborated by the third Provisional Government talked about "the cessation of all forms of exploitation existing in and characteristic of the capitalist system." This however was pure "talk": What was envisaged was a strong state capitalist sector under the control of the military and the state bureaucracy, not a democratically planned economy under workers' management. Certainly they did not want, and resisted as far as possible every struggle of the workers for real elements of control in the factories and on the land.

The Sixth Provisional Government, faced with a catastrophic economic situation, was pledged from the start to "solve" it at the expense of the working class.

remain intact, the working class has lost the initiative and has been restricted to largely sectional battles. Unemployment is now well over 400,000 or around 14% (in Britain this would mean 3 million out of work). In January the cost of living index showed a 50% rise on the previous 12 months. After the 25th the government imposed a 3 month total wage freeze.

Factory closures threaten on a massive scale. There is evidence that many of the big multinationals are preparing to withdraw from Portugal — not to sabotage a government they basically approve of but because their whole operations were based on super-exploitative wage rates. Timex has made nearly 700 of its workers redundant and wants to get rid of another 500.

The Government, desperate to attract foreign capital, is frantically trying to persuade the old bosses and managers to return, offering to hive off the nationalised enterprises and break the hold of the workers organisation on them. In a number of small or medium sized firms, particularly in textiles, the government and the old bosses have split and confused the workers into calling for the return of the former owners.

The struggle for workers' control in Portugal has demonstrated once again the fantastic creativity of the working class in struggle; against economic sabotage, in the pursuit of improvements in the appalling conditions and near subsistence wages, workers established a whole system of workers' control and inspection. The lessons of this struggle are invaluable to the working class in Britain and beyond. In the Setenave shipyards the workers committee has a sub-committee charged specifically with overseeing workers' control. Five workers' control programmes were discussed by the general assembly of all the Setenave workers and the one adopted received 53% of all votes. Amongst its proposals it lays down:

"2. The role of workers' control is not to endorse the Administration policies but to watch closely its decisions and to denounce those amongst them which are against the interests of the workers."

"To request from the Administration any documents or management reports; some of these elements should be submitted regularly to the sub-committee in order that the workers know the main activities of the shipyard at every moment."

The programme goes on to enumerate the tasks of this control and inspection and to demand the availability of specialists under the worker delegates' inspection to assist in interpreting information documents etc. The aim is, according to this programme, is "that the workers should view the exercise of workers' control as a necessary practice, heading for a new kind of production relations."

The struggles of the bank workers, the workers in the media, most notably the workers' newspaper "Republica" and the radio station "Renasçensa", demonstrated the willingness and the ability of the working class to take control of the nation's economy. The reverses suffered in these struggles, the onslaught of the forces of reaction and the state likewise demonstrate that the battle is a political one.

based on working class democracy becomes more and more vital. To achieve this, more than 'dual power' in the factories and offices is necessary. Indeed even total workers management in isolated factories or in the agricultural cooperatives can only be a temporary solution, for as long as political power is in the hands of the bourgeoisie and their agents, as long as the economy as a whole is capitalist, dislocation and sabotage will still run riot and will ultimately disrupt the workers' efforts and demoralise the workforce. This is why unless the democratic organs of workers' control and struggle, the commissions, the factory committees move on to the road of the struggle for political power, the gains already made will be lost.

CONCLUSIONS

Since 25th November there has been a stabilisation. Yet the acute economic crisis, and the fact that the workers' organisations remain essentially intact, pose the continuing possibility of new working-class explosions — or of a sharp attack by the right wing to impose an Argentine-type solution to the economic crisis.

Revolutionaries should of course be involved in every economic and political struggle waged by the industrial and agricultural workers against the return of factories to their old owners, against unemployment, against rapidly falling real wages. In each and every one of these fights, they must argue for maximum unity in action of all sections of workers, for solidarity and support action. But they must also argue for full freedom for political tendencies in the workers movement to argue their strategy. Over the last two years the Portuguese workers have suffered both bureaucratically imposed 'unity' from the CP, the crushing of free speech within the workers' movement, aimed sometimes against the SP, sometimes against the revolutionary left. They have also suffered from the left groups intermeddling factionalism which disrupted unity in action. Revolutionaries must offer to fight alongside CP, SP and non-party workers for a united front against the bourgeois offensive.

The fact remains that the vast majority of workers and sections of the petty-bourgeoisie still give their allegiance to the reformist workers' parties, the PCP and the PPS. Despite their respective protestations during the elections, both Cunhal and Soares want to govern in alliance with forces representing the bourgeoisie — either the MFA generals or the PPD. Any permutation of this sort in the context of Portugal's deep economic crisis will be an anti-working class government attempting to solve this crisis at the expense of the working class gains made since 1974.

The millions of CP and SP voters did not vote for this. At the very least, they voted to keep the CDS, the PPD, and the right wing generals off their backs. The fight for a workers' united front must first have and now in every struggle but it cannot be

them. The call for the front cannot exclude these parties themselves. Indeed, to specifically exclude one or other or both of them because they are "social-fascist" or "the main bulwark of reaction" is stupid ultra-leftism.

What are the basic planks of a united front platform in the present situation?

- (1) Defence of and solidarity with all struggles over wages, conditions, and workers' control. Defence of the nationalised industries against return to their former bosses.
- (2) Defence of the agricultural workers and their cooperatives against economic sabotage and against the restriction or reversal of the agrarian reform.
- (3) Opposition to repression against soldiers. For full democratic rights for soldiers, including the election of officers by assemblies in the barracks.
- (4) Against unemployment. For full maintenance and a programme of public works under workers' control.
- (5) Defence of the democratic rights won by the workers, freedom of assembly, workers' control of the media, against legal restrictions on the trade unions. For disbandment of the paramilitary police and for armed workers' defence squads.
- (6) Against the military presidential system. Sovereignty of the Legislative Assembly.

A Revolutionary nucleus in Portugal shall fight for the united action of the workers' organisations round each of the demands of this platform.

The united front tactic does not stop short at the question of what sort of government the workers need. Of course revolutionaries believe and say that the only government that can act consistently, wholeheartedly and effectively for the workers is one based on workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils — a government which is the executive of the dictatorship of the proletariat itself. We support, if necessary, the forcible dispersal of bourgeois-democratic parliamentary assemblies in favour of the power of workers' councils and reject the idea of a peaceful coexistence of the power of workers' councils and a bourgeois democratic state.

However revolutionaries do not simply wait for this and make propaganda about it. Within the ranks of workers in struggle, as part of the struggle for the united front, they call for a workers' government which would carry through these vital measures which would shove all arm the workers against reaction. Revolutionaries would support such a government, though it consisted of non-revolutionary socialists, against all reactionary forces — arms in hand, if necessary. They would also fight to make it answerable to the various workers' councils and commissions. They would criticise every vacillation, every weakness, not hiding the fact that such a government would either be transitional to the dictatorship of the proletariat or it would again go down before the forces of counter-revolution.

This situation is of course not on the order of the day, though any massive resurgence by the working class could put it there.

At the moment, the workers' parties have a majority in the Legislative Assembly. Revolutionaries should urge the workers' parties to force their parties to break with the CP and the SP to force their parties to break with the generals and the bourgeois parties and form a government. Given the nature of the SP and CP, of Cunhal and Soares, this government would only act in the workers' interests treacherously and episodically to the extent that the workers forced it to — revolutionaries would support every action of this type while mercilessly criticising and joining with the rank and file of these parties in fighting every anti-working class act.

Only these tactics and demands, fought for in every workers' peasants' and soldiers' organisation — in the unions of the Inter-Syndical, in the workers and neighbourhood commissions, in the agricultural cooperatives in the barracks — can mobilise the forces necessary to stem the tide of reaction and put the question of workers' power firmly on the agenda again.